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ABSTRACT

American society places great demands on the young people who attend U.S. public schools. Required courses and basic education needs jam the curriculum. It is little wonder that sometimes it becomes difficult for teachers and school officials to incorporate into the curriculum basic units regarding the public schools and local school governance; yet many of Pennsylvania's high school seniors are eligible to hold office as school directors, and all the state's high schoolers will eventually pay school taxes. This student booklet is the Pennsylvania School Boards Association's attempt to provide helpful information to supplement the social studies curriculum. Designed as a minicourse of 3 to 10 class periods in duration, this document is to be used at the discretion of the teacher. In addition to this student booklet, a Teacher's Resource Notebook is available that contains several possible instructional strategies, transparencies, and other classroom activities. Pennsylvania has a rich, diverse history of educational excellence. A study of Pennsylvania, its people, its economy, and its geography is also a study of its public schools and educational accomplishments. (KM)

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Boards, Students & Community

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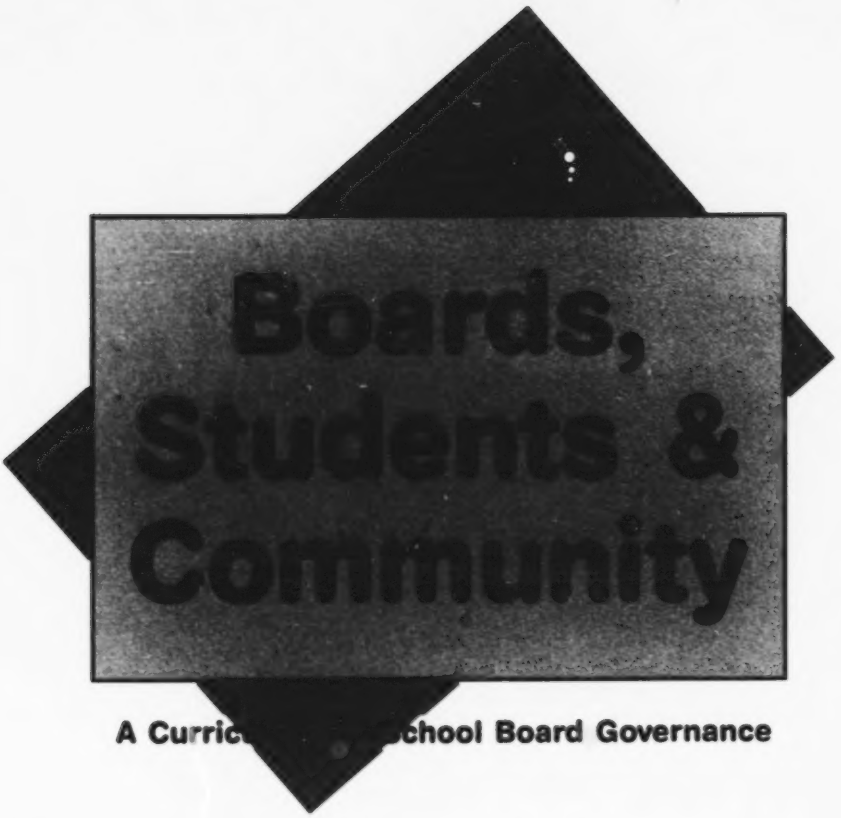

A Curric[illegible]chool Board Governance

Published by the
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
in cooperation with the
Pennsylvania Association
for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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Preface

Since the compulsory school attendance law was passed in 1895, our children have been required to attend some form of schooling. For most of us that attendance has occurred in our public schools.

Today, society puts great demands on the young people in our public schools. Curriculum is jammed with required courses and basic education needs. It's little wonder with all these demands that sometimes it becomes difficult for our teachers and school officials to incorporate basic units into the curriculum about the public schools and local school governance. And yet many of our high school seniors are eligible to hold office as school directors and all our high schoolers, sooner or later, will pay school taxes.

Boards, Students and Community: A Curriculum for School Board Governance is our attempt to provide helpful information to supplement the social studies curriculum. It's designed as a minicourse, three to 10 class periods, to be used at the discretion of the teacher. Besides this student booklet, a Teachers' Resource Notebook also is available, containing several possible instructional strategies, transparencies and other classroom activities.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association and the leadership of the Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (PASCD) are pleased and excited about this first-ever attempt to offer our public schools support and instructional materials concerning local school governance. In addition, the Pennsylvania Council for Social Studies endorsed and supported our efforts to begin this mini-curriculum series.

Pennsylvania has a rich, diverse history of educational excellence. As one of the 13 original colonies, our schools were born through the vision of William Penn and his dream of a free and universal public school system. A study of Pennsylvania, its people, its economy and its geography also is a study of its public schools and educational accomplishments.

On behalf of PASCD, we express our sincere appreciation to all who contributed to these curriculum materials. We trust they will be helpful to the young people who eventually will be called upon to advocate and serve future generations for the good of our public schools.

We welcome and invite comments and suggestions from students, parents, teachers, administrators, other school officials and the general public.

Joseph V. Oravitz
PSBA Executive Director

Acknowledgments

One of PSBA's long-term goals has been the development of an effective mini-course about local school governance geared for the senior high school student.

Through the excellent cooperation and endorsement of the Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (PASCD), the student booklet and teachers' resource guide has been completed and is available to all local school districts. The project also was endorsed by the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies.

Special recognition is extended to PASCD project members who developed the resource materials and critiqued the student handbook: **Dr. John M. Gould,** assistant superintendent, Eastern Lancaster County School District; **Dr. Larry Burkhart,** assistant principal, Garden Spot High School, Eastern Lancaster County School District; **Dr. William J. Switala,** director of secondary education, Bethel Park School District; **Thomas Helman,** social studies department chairman, Cumberland Valley School District; and **Joyce Barilla,** second grade teacher and chairman of K-5 social studies department, Smithfield Elementary School, East Stroudsburg Area School District.

PSBA staff members **Nick L. Goble,** assistant executive director, and **Donald B. Owen Esq.,** inservice education director, authored the student handbook. **Lynn H. Mannion,** publication services director, edited all the materials. Typesetting, layout and design were completed by **Patrice Ruth,** PSBA typesetter/graphic designer.

PSBA extends its sincere appreciation to all organizations and individuals who contributed to this excellent resource.

Nick L. Goble
PSBA Assistant Executive Director

Boards, Students & Community: A Curriculum for School Board Governance

Students, parents and the general public sometimes don't see the "big picture" of what it costs to send a youngster to school. As the expression goes, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." Public education is free only to the extent that parents of school-age children are not directly billed for the cost of having their children educated. If parents were billed, the cost would be approximately $4,000 a year per student.

A typical school district has 200 children in each of the grades from kindergarten through 12th grade. How much, then, would the local school district spend each year?

A little simple multiplication demonstrates that $4,000 per year times 200 (children) equals $800,000. Multiply that number by 13 grade levels, and the total is $10,400,000 per year.

Approximately 90% of that $10,400,000 pays for four items: (1) **salaries** paid to teachers and other school district employees; (2) **debt service** (paying back the money borrowed to construct school buildings); (3) **maintenance** of buildings; and (4) **student transportation.**

Who pays for all of this? Local residents and taxpayers, through federal, state and local taxes. The monies then are returned from local, state and federal governments in these percentages:*

- Local property owners and residents — 49% (property and other local taxes)
- State Legislature — 46% (state subsidies)
- Federal government — 5% (federal grants)

**Estimated statewide average*

Thaddeus Stevens had migrated to Pennsylvania from Vermont and established a law practice in Gettysburg. He was a neophyte in the House of Representatives, but was committed to the cause of public education. He advanced some of the same arguments that Thomas Jefferson had in an unadopted plan for education in Virginia about a half-century earlier. But the times were ready for Stevens and his eloquence in 1835. The new enabling legislation he spoke for so meaningfully assigned major responsibilities to school boards as the agents of local government. Stevens went on to be elected to the U.S. Congress, was an outstanding Abolitionist, and lived to see his beloved Gettysburg torn apart in the battle that turned the tide in the Civil War.

In Pennsylvania's colonial history from approximately 1745-55, a new consensus emerged regarding the purpose and scope of schooling. The colony's most respected citizen, Benjamin Franklin, set his considerable genius to work on conceptualizing and creating an institution appropriate for its time, which also served as a model for future American schooling beyond basic literacy.

Needless to say, public education is a major commitment in America, both in dollars and personal resources. Some $830 per person in Pennsylvania is spent by state and local governments for education. However, the system of public schools we enjoy today is much different than that of yesteryear.

Dreams of advocates of free schools for all children were shaken by negative response that rocked virtually every Pennsylvania community as the implications of the act of 1834 filtered through to those who were to implement and to fund the legislation at the local level. Many legislators who had voted for the Free School Act received verbal abuse when they went home to their local constituents. A large number of legislators were elected in 1834 on the promise that they would fight to repeal the suddenly unpopular act. Such legislation was proposed in December 1834, and passed the Senate 19-11. However, the bill met unexpected opposition in the House of Representatives, where Thaddeus Stevens rose to speak against the repeal. His eloquence electrified the House, which turned back the repeal attempt 70-30. Then it set out to correct what were considered to be practical flaws in the original legislation.

George Wolf, elected Pennsylvania governor in 1829, was a longtime advocate for improved education. He had been educated in his native Northampton County, served as a teacher in the academy in which he had been educated, practiced law and then turned to politics. He served in the state Legislature and the U.S. Congress, and was state governor for two three-year terms. He is widely known for his role in establishing public education in Pennsylvania. The Free School Act passed in 1834, during Wolf's second term, and was the first effective law in Pennsylvania to provide access to schooling regardless of the financial condition of the family.

Historical Development of Pennsylvania Public Schools

In colonial (pre-Revolutionary War) times, there were no public schools as we now know them in Pennsylvania. The state constitution passed in 1776 specifically provided for the Legislature to create a "thorough and efficient system" of education.

In 1790 that system was available only to children whose parents took the pauper's (poor person's) oath. This was an objectionable feature that discouraged many parents from sending their children to the "common" schools.

In fact, although legislation in 1804 and 1809 authorized the courts to appoint 12-member boards of education, it was not until 1818 that the first public school district was established in Philadelphia.

Very little public education occurred until well into the 1850s. Most education was provided by churches and families.

The "Free School Act" was passed in

1834, largely at the insistence of Governor George Wolf of Easton who made free public schools his major campaign platform in 1829. Ironically, he lost his bid for a third term as governor in 1835, primarily because of the passage of the act. The act was almost repealed. Luckily, the eloquence of Thaddeus Stevens, a young lawyer and legislator from Gettysburg, not only preserved the notion of free public schools, but strengthened the act and the authority of locally elected school boards.

Most aspects of the new "Free School Act" were permissive and not mandatory. Consequently, only a few schools came into existence over the next 10 to 20 years, and they were primarily elementary buildings. The first high school, Central High in Philadelphia, was not created until 1836. It was 1874 before even elementary schools were operating in every district.

In 1854, the position of county superintendent was created (78 years after county schools were authorized), and the more than 4,000 individual districts were reduced to approximately 2,500, to eliminate city wards and many one-room schoolhouse districts. A few years later the first state supported teachers' colleges (called "normal schools") were established.

School attendance did not become compulsory until 1895, at which time six years of schooling was required. Today, school attendance is required from no later than the age of eight through age 17, and most students attend for 13 years.

In 1895 school board members in Pennsylvania established the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, the first state to do so. The following January, 153 school directors traveled to Harrisburg to hold the association's first convention. (See the accompanying box for a glimpse of life in the 1890s for those conventioneers.)

By 1915, the effects of the Industrial Revolution in America were being felt in

1896

Attending the first PSBA convention

What was it like for the 153 school directors and county superintendents who gathered in Harrisburg on Jan. 8, 1896, for the first convention of the new state school board association?

There were no women school directors in 1896. The men who attended probably arrived by rail or horse drawn carriage. It was undoubtedly a long cold trip for those who made it to Harrisburg. Some travelers may have sought comfort by packing hot fluids in a vacuum bottle (invented in 1873) known as the Dewar Flask.

With the exception of central heating systems, Harrisburg hotels in 1896 would have been similar to modern facilities inasmuch as they probably had elevators (invented in 1853), cash registers (patented in 1879), fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems (1874) and indoor plumbing.

If someone from home needed to contact a delegate they had access to a telegraph and may well have been able to phone directly. The telegraph had been popular since the 1840s; the phone was invented in 1876 and by 1889 automatic switching systems were in place in most major cities.

Had someone broken a leg during the convention, ether was available as an anesthetic; however, X-rays were years away from discovery and use.

Prior to the Free School Act of 1834, Pennsylvanians were setting the stage for the first public high schools and academies of higher education. Religious groups, and such visionaries as Benjamin Franklin, fostered the notion of local governance and community education. This approach to public education was later incorporated into the first Pennsylvania Constitution, and the philosophy emulated by other states who joined the Union.

public education in Pennsylvania. The Coxe Child Labor Law was passed, requiring all children between 14 and 16 to attend school as a way of combating the ills of child labor in factories. At the same time, vocational-agricultural programs were forced to share the limelight with industrial arts (manual training) schools.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, our country was shocked to find that able-bodied and able-minded young men suitable for military service were in short supply. IQ testing emerged in this era, and courses in physical fitness, health and nutrition began to creep into the curriculum. For the first time the federal government began to exercise an influence and an interest in education, recognizing the correlation between a healthy, well-educated citizenry and the national defense.

The Great Depression (1929-41) left millions jobless in America. School teachers who were making approximately $80 a month suffered 10% to 20% reductions

Post-World War II realities for education

Pennsylvania school boards faced real problems during the years following World War II:

• School enrollments were rising rapidly. A high birth rate had resulted in a "baby boom."

• School buildings tended to be old and in poor repair, as few new buildings had been built during the 1930s when the Great Depression had seen a declining birth rate. Then school districts had been forced to lay off teachers and to cancel plans for school construction.

• Teachers, who had been lured away from the classroom during WW II, had to be enticed back to classroom service despite salaries that had not increased much from the repressed figures of the Depression.

• New housing developments, whole planned communities, went sprawling into farmlands around the cities. Satisfactory classrooms were needed to house the students who were moving into kindergarten and who would be entitled to 12 more years of schooling. School boards who had been elected to serve rural constituencies often found that they were responsible for building and running suburban schools.

• The GI Bill, which made vocational and higher education feasible for thousands of Pennsylvania veterans, many of whom were children of the working class, often proved to be an excellent source of prospective teachers who helped staff the schools.

• Unresolved world tensions—the "cold war"— had direct impact upon elementary and secondary education. School boards and educators were made sensitive to deficiencies in what was taught and in the standards of schools, particularly following the launch of Sputnik I by the Soviet Union.

in pay. Yet not one school district had to stop operations in Pennsylvania, although throughout the country thousands of districts closed their doors for several years.

The next major shock to the country's educational system occurred in 1957 when the Russians launched Sputnik I, the world's first space satellite. Once again the federal government responded by making massive amounts of money available, especially for teacher training and in the areas of math, science, and foreign languages for colleges and secondary schools.

In the 1950s districts were busy constructing new buildings to accommodate the post World War II baby boom. The number of school districts again declined from approximately 2,500 (almost every borough and township supported a separate K-12 school system) to the current

Some firsts in Pennsylvania public education

1882 — Mary E. Mumford was the first woman to be elected school director. She served on the Sectional School Board, Philadelphia 29th Ward.

1895 — First class for mentally handicapped children formed in the public schools anywhere in the U.S. was established in Philadelphia by Dr. Oliver P. Cornman.

1903 — Act 118 mandated a $35 per month minimum salary for teachers.

1908 — First joint school (Tredyffrin-Easttown, Chester Co.) was formed in Pennsylvania.

1911 — General Assembly adopted Public School Code.

1937 — Philadelphia was first municipality to enter into bilateral agreements with labor organizations for public employees.

1938 — Television used in classroom for first time.

1947 — School district reorganization mandated by the General Assembly.

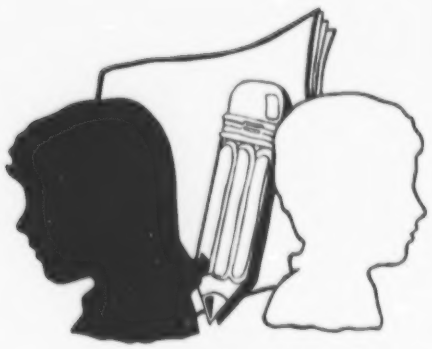
1949 — Public School Code revised (Act 14).

1961 — Law passed to provide for establishment of area vocational-technical schools.

1963 — Act 299, school reorganization law, was passed. More than 2,500 school districts existed at the time. School board membership was set at nine.

1964 — Harrisburg Area Community College—the first community college in Pennsylvania—opens its doors.

Philadelphia's Central High School was America's first high school outside New England. An imposing building for its day (1838), built of brick with a front of blue marble and a portico of white marble, the entire cost for the lot, building and equipment was $72,000. It was situated on what is now the west side of the John Wanamaker Store.



501. This dramatic change occurred not as a result of a world war or a depression, but because of a book, *The American High School Today,* written by Dr. James Conant and published by the Carnegie Corporation in 1958.

Dr. Conant's main point was that a high school class of less than 100 could not provide enough variety in scheduling and curriculum offerings to meet the challenging and changing times.

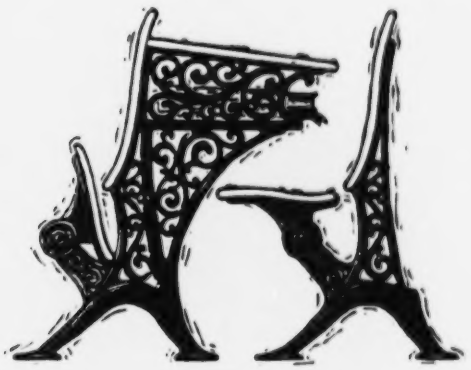
Today there are 501 school districts (K-12), 88 vocational-technical schools, and 29 intermediate units. The IUs were created in the early 1970s to succeed the county superintendent structure and to deal with the expensive special education requirements for disabled children.

The current educational structure that students understand and recognize may change before the 21st century. Some people in education, industry and politics are calling for a "restructuring" of public schools.

The event that triggered the so-called "reform movement" of the 1980s was the issuance, in April 1983, of a report by U.S. Secretary of Education Terrell Bell titled "A Nation At Risk." The report claimed that public education was mired in a "sea of mediocrity," and boldly claimed:

> If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.

U.S. students have been declared "losers" in mathematics achievement when compared to other students around the world. A 1989 Educational Testing Service study stated that American 13-year-olds scored last in mathematics in a six-nation comparative study. The survey further stated, "Three out of four U.S. students leave school without mastering enough mathematics to cope with either on-the-job demands for problem solving or college expectations for mathematical literacy."



Key events in Pennsylvania public education history

- **1834** — **The Free School Act passed,** establishing school districts that were identical with the smallest political subdivisions in the state. Local school districts were to receive a state subsidy by agreeing to provide free schooling for all children who resided in their district. Provision for election of school board members also was included in the act.

- **1836** — **School boards were given responsibility for oversight of schools in their district.** This amending legislation to the 1834 act gave local school boards responsibility and authority for the establishment, operation and local accountability for its "common schools" (similar to current elementary schools). A precedent for public secondary education was created in the same year when a law was passed which permitted Philadelphia to open a public high school.

- **1852** — **Assembly of advocacy group to promote educational reforms and publication of educational journal.** Under the leadership of the first superintendent of common schools, Thomas H. Burrowes, *Pennsylvania School Journal* was published and a permanent organization of educators was formed. This state teachers' association advocated an independent Department of Education, normal schools for education of teachers, and a county superintendent. The present Pennsylvania State Education Association traces its roots to this organization.

- **1854** — **County superintendent position created.** Legislation in 1854 established the post of county superintendent to aid local school districts in the supervision of teachers, to certify teachers, and to provide a direct link with the state department. The act strengthened the powers of local school boards and eliminated the small subdistricts in urban areas, which were falling under a patronage system.

- **1873** — **Pennsylvania adopted present constitution,** institutionalizing the state agency that coordinated public schools as the Department of Public Instruction and assigned the title of superintendent of public instruction to its chief executive officer. Dr. James P. Wickersham was named to the new position, which he held for 14 years. The constitution guaranteed schooling for children over the age of six and required equality in the assignment of school offices or positions for women with men.

- **1893** — **Dr. Nathan C. Schaeffer named superintendent of public instruction,** a position he held until 1919 — the longest term of any superintendent of public instruction. Dr. Schaeffer and Dr. Wickersham provided extraordinary leadership during their tenure in Harrisburg. During this time, secondary schools were authorized for all school districts, and a system of state-subsidized teacher-training institutions (normal schools) was in place.

- **1895** — **All districts authorized to establish high schools.** Prior to the Civil War, the Legislature had to authorize the establishment of individual high schools. Legislation in 1887 and 1893 had given this right to certain larger school districts. After 1895 any district could form a high school.

  The state's first compulsory attendance law was passed in 1895, requiring all children between ages 8 and 13 to attend school.

  And Pennsylvania became the first state to form an association of school boards with the founding of the organization in 1895 which evolved into the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

- **1913** — **The Showalter Act authorized statewide vocational education** programs in agriculture, home economics and industrial education.

- **1915** — **Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh elected governor.** Brumbaugh had been a pioneer educator during the transition of Pennsylvania from a rural, agricultural-based economy to a major industrial state. During his term in office, America fought World War I, and Pennsylvania passed the Coxe Child Labor Law (1915), which required minors ages 14-16 to attend school for a certain number of hours per week. During Brumbaugh's term, the Bureau of Vocational Education was established within the Department of Public Instruction.

- **1920-21** — **The commonwealth purchased 14 normal schools,** previously independently owned and subsidized by the state. They became state teachers' colleges during the decade, with authorization to grant bachelor's degrees in education.

- **1921** — **The Edmonds Act passed.** This was an omnibus bill that updated and modified 72 specific laws. Among its provisions, the Department of Public Instruction was granted authority to issue teaching certificates; the state subsidy system was amended to relate to the level of teaching certificates held by classroom teachers employed by a district; a state Council of Education was created, with some responsibilities for higher education as well as major responsibilities for policy development for elementary and secondary education. The act also made the junior high school an official part of secondary education, established curriculum regulations for high school programs, and increased the movement to school centralization by encouraging union school districts.

- **1923** — **Gifford Pinchot began first term as governor.** An Administrative Code was enacted under this progressive governor that reorganized all of state government. In the Department of Public Instruction, a division of kindergarten and elementary education was created, integrating kindergarten into the public school system.

- **1934** — **Citizen's Conference on School Recovery in Pennsylvania.** As an industrial state, Pennsylvania was particularly hard hit by the Depression. This conference attracted more than 2,000 people who considered mechanisms for school recovery. Although more than 20,000 schools across the country were forced to close in the early stages of the Depression, no school in Pennsylvania had to close during the period from 1931-35. The 1930s was a period of severe fiscal restraint, when teachers' salaries were decreased and virtually no new school construction was accomplished.

- **1945** — **Hare-Lee-Sollenberger Act passed,** a school subsidy plan that gave aid to local school districts based upon the ability of the local district to pay for a basic educational program. It also included a salary schedule for teachers.

- **1956** — **Dr. Charles H. Boehm selected superintendent of public instruction.** He served as superintendent until 1964 and was an energetic and often controversial executive. During his first year in office, a sound fiscal foundation was laid for the schools at the state level, with approval of a state sales tax to be used solely to fund education. Dr. Boehm devoted a great deal of attention to updated curriculum, especially the physical and social sciences, in response to the "space age." During his tenure, a Bureau of Special Services for Pupils was organized to supervise special education programs.

The Structure of School Boards

• Becoming a Candidate

School board members are elected locally in each of the 501 districts, except in Philadelphia where they are appointed by the mayor. All boards have nine members. They are elected for four-year terms and may succeed themselves with no limitation.

Every two years four or five positions open for re-election. Death, resignation, or a member moving from the district also may create vacancies. Boards are allowed to fill such vacancies by appointing someone to serve for no more than two years or until the next municipal election that is held in November of each odd-numbered year.

School board members receive no compensation, are not allowed to do business with the school district, and are not allowed to take a job with the district during the term for which they've been elected.

To be eligible to be elected or appointed to a Pennsylvania school board, a candidate must be: 18 years of age, a citizen of Pennsylvania, of good moral character, a resident of the district for at least one year prior to the date of election (or appointment), and must **not** be an employee of the district.

To become a school board candidate, a petition must be filed that has been signed by at least 10 qualified voters of the school district for the political party with which the petition will be filed. The petitions are filed in the county courthouse.

Board member candidates are allowed to "cross-file," that is, seek nomination from both political parties. A registered Democrat or Republican must circulate a proper petition for the other party, with signatures as previously mentioned.

Becoming a school board candidate

School board members in Pennsylvania are elected officials. Members are elected for a four-year term, with the election process calling for five members being eligible for re-election during one election cycle and four being eligible in the next cycle. This 5-4 rotation eliminates having nine new members on a school board and ensures continuity.

There are three ways school districts may elect board members:

- At large — members may live anywhere in the district and be elected for any position.
- Regionally — school directors who reside in the region are elected by and from each region.
- Combination — all regions have an equal number of school directors who reside in each region and who are elected by each region.

Nomination petitions may begin circulation on the 13th Tuesday before the primaries and must be completed before the 10th Tuesday preceding the primary election. The primary elections preceding each general election are held on the third Tuesday of May in even-numbered years, except in presidential election years when they are held on the fourth Tuesday of April. Municipal primary elections preceding each municipal election are held on the third Tuesday of May in odd-numbered years. General elections are held biennially on the Tuesday next following the first Monday in November in even-numbered years. Municipal elections are held on the same day in odd-numbered years.

Each election year, the state Bureau of Elections distributes a complete election calendar with specific dates and

other legal requirements to all county offices. Nomination petitions, financial interest statements, campaign finance reports and other information can be secured from the county or municipal office.

• Other Filings Required

If candidates spend more than $250 on their campaign or allow others to organize a campaign on their behalf to raise money, they must file expense reports accounting for sources of income or donations and how the money was spent.

Candidates also must file a "statement of financial interest" for the preceding calendar year with the State Ethics Commission before nomination petitions may be filed. The nomination petition with the financial interest statement attached must be filed with the local school district. Incumbent school directors must file financial interest statements annually with the school district office, which must maintain them for public inspection for at least five years.

All sources of income, but not amounts, must be disclosed in the financial interest statement.

Only voters registered as Republicans and Democrats can vote in the primary elections and they only vote for persons nominated by their respective parties.

So, if Sally Smith runs on both the Republican and Democratic tickets and receives the highest number of votes from both parties, she will have no competition on the November ballot for that position, unless someone mounted an extremely successful write-in campaign.

If John Jones and Ellen Eagleton also cross-filed and ran for a second vacancy on the board, and John had the second highest number of votes from the Republicans, but very few from the Democrats, and Ellen had the second highest from the Democrats but very few from the Republicans, they would face each other in the general election in November.

Prior to the current 5-4 cycle (four board positions expire in 1989, five in 1991, four in 1993, five in 1995, etc.), board members were elected to six-year terms. Therefore, every two years only three positions could possibly turn over. Many people feel that this longer term made boards much more stable and gave newer board members more time to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective.

With the rapid turnover often caused by the current four-year term (and its 5-4 cycle), it is not unusual to have a majority of a school board with very little experience. It takes two years or more before the typical board member begins to know the many aspects of school law, labor law, parliamentary procedure, finances, and public relations that contribute to becoming a knowledgeable school director. Good intentions aren't always enough.

Attitudes of American school boards

- 73% of women board members believe they are best qualified in areas of curriculum and instruction.
- 68% of male board members say they are best qualified in areas of finance.
- Both male and female board members acknowledge policy making as their primary function.
- Women report being primarily involved in planning and goal-setting, followed by community relations, curriculum and instruction.
- Men say their greatest invovlement is in budget development, collective bargaining, facilities and business management.
- Female board members are likely to spend more time in the schools, be more inovlved in parent-teacher organizations, and to have been employed by the schools or to have worked as a school volunteer.
- Both male (64.9%) and female (53.8%) board members agree that the superintendent should be the absolute manager of the school system.

The majority (41%) of state school directors are between the ages of 40 and 49, and 31% are college graduates while another 30% have advanced degrees. Most report spending between 11 and 20 hours per month on school board business; 54% have two or three children; and 90% of children of school board members attend public schools.

The number of female board members in Pennsylvania increased by 8% from 1984 to 1988 — from 27% to 35% of the total of 5,409. The average board member serves 6.4 years.

Sometimes students sit as nonvoting members of their school boards. Approximately one-third of all districts have one or two student representatives who attend all board meetings (except executive sessions).

These student representatives, usually a junior and a senior for purposes of continuity, are selected in a variety of ways — some by the student body, some by principals or teachers, and some by the board itself.

School district budgets

The school budget often has been called the road map to the future programs and services of a school district. As the financial plan for the fiscal year, the budget provides the school board with the most direct opportunity to influence the character and substance of local school operations. With consideration and adoption of the budget, school boards give direction and guidance to the administration on various factors that will profoundly affect future educational programs of the district.

While the percentage may vary somewhat from district to district, 90% of the school budget is usually represented in the following categories: salaries and wages; transportation; plant operation; and debt service.

The School Code requires districts of the second, third and fourth class:

- Prepare a proposed budget at least 30 days prior to adoption of the budget for the following fiscal year.
- Make the proposed budget available for public inspection at least 20 days prior to the date set for adoption.
- Provide 10 days public notice prior to any final action on the budget.
- Adopt the budget and necessary appropriations required to put it into effect at a sunshine meeting, and file a copy with the Department of Education.

Deficit financing is prohibited by the School Code; the total amount of the budget shall not exceed the amount of funds available to the district. However, the board may change the budget to meet emergencies, such as floods, fires or other catastrophes.

The superintendent: Chief educational officer

In Pennsylvania schools, the superintendent is responsible for making recommendations to the school board, researching requests made by a majority of the board, and administering board decisions.

A superintendent's duties also include reporting deficiencies to the board, and personally visiting the school buildings and ensuring that equal opportunity is afforded to all students regardless of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin.

Superintendents must provide reports to the school board, as determined by board policy that controls both the type and the frequency. Reports cover such topics as teacher absenteeism, vandalism, student achievement, truancy and many others.

In return, the superintendent has expectations of the board members, chief among which is that they be honest and straightforward. In addition, the superintendent expects: dedication to quality education, support, appreciation, adequate staff, and training opportunities for staff.

• Board Officers and Other School Officials

Each board has four officers: a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. All are elected by the board, not by the electorate.

The president and vice president are both elected annually during the first week in December. Both serve at the pleasure of the board and either can be removed during that 12-month term. The treasurer is elected each May. The treasurer does not have to be a board member. Some boards elect a bank or the district's business manager. The secretary is elected for a four-year term in May (of 1989, 1993, 1997, etc). The secretary cannot be a board member in the commonwealth's larger (second class) school districts, of which there are approximately

Modern school subsidy system

When public education entered its current era, attention was focused on expansion of the local tax base and on strengthening subsidy and other assistance efforts. The launch of Sputnik I in 1957, for instance, cleared the way for a federal role in the funding of public schools, initially for reasons of national defense.

From these developments has emerged Pennsylvania's modern subsidy system, which is intended to equalize the financial resources available to school districts.

Through an intricate formula, state aid is apportioned so that relatively poorer school districts receive greater assistance than do wealthier ones. The means of accomplishing this purpose has undergone a number of changes in recent years, and continues to be affected by the levels of funding actually provided by the General Assembly.

Prior to 1968, subsidy payments were made on the basis of teaching units, which were considered to be 35 elementary or 22 secondary students. Act 96 of that year introduced the "weighted pupil" factor in disbursing state aid, a recognition of the significant cost differential in educating kindergarten, elementary and secondary students. A district's Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM) is calculated by multiplying the number of students enrolled by the appropriate factor for each.

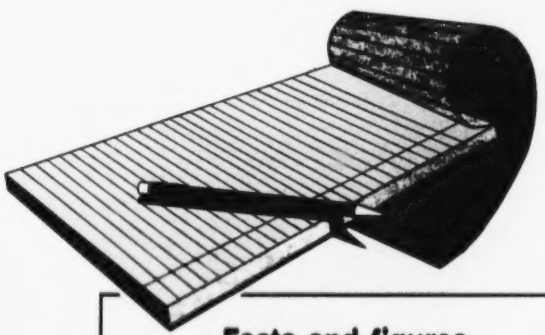
The process of determining a district's wealth, and thereby its relative need for state financial assistance, results in its Market Value Personal Income Aid Ratio, more commonly known as aid ratio. The aid ratio is a reflection of a district's ability to raise local revenues. Both real property market value and personal income are used in determining this tax-raising ability. In computing the aid ratio, property market value is given a 60% weighting and personal income is weighted at 40%.

Under the current Equalized Subsidy for Basic Education (ESBE), funds are distributed on the basis of a formula that includes aid ratio, WADMs and a fixed dollar amount per pupil, known as the Factor for Educational Expense. Most state aid to public education is paid in the form of the ESBE.

The state's role in the support of public school systems is intended primarily to ensure an equitable distribution of resources among districts of widely varing wealth, not to replace or supplant local funding.

80. Even in the smaller districts (third and fourth class) where the board secretary can be a board member, the position is just as likely to be held by an employee of the district, such as the superintendent's secretary or the business manager.

All boards have a superintendent. By law this person is selected by the board for a term of three to five years. Virtually all boards also select a lawyer (known as a solicitor) and a business manager.



Facts and figures about Pennsylvania schools

Number of school districts	501
Number of school directors	4,509
Number of school buildings	3,313
Number of teachers	104,379
Number of administrative employees	6,416
Number of support staff	80,140
Total public school enrollment	1,668,542
Projected enrollment by 2000	2,034,969
Largest district — Philadelphia	197,517
High school graduation rate	78.7%
Per person state and local spending for education	$830

• Subcommittees of the Board

Approximately 75% of all boards have standing subcommittees that meet at various times during the year. Most subcommittees consist of three members and by custom or policy are appointed by the board president.

The most common subcommittees are personnel, athletics, extracurricular activities, buildings and grounds, curriculum, negotiations, and transportation.

The subcommittees often have one or more administrators assigned to assist board members in understanding district operations in more detail. Subcommittees are charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the full board following their indepth scrutiny of issues referred to them.

• Conducting Meetings

Boards follow *Robert's Rules of Order* or some other published parliamentary procedural guide, and they operate according to a preprinted and agreed upon agenda, usually put together by the superintendent, business manager, president and secretary.

Many important issues such as hiring, firing, adopting the budget, textbooks, courses, and the school calendar require a minimum of five votes for passage. A few require six votes, such as budget transfers and dismissing a tenured teacher. If the item on the agenda does not fall into either one of the so-called "five-vote" or "six-vote" categories, a simple majority of those present and voting is enough for a motion to be approved. Most voting is done by roll call vote.

By law, boards must meet at least once every two months. Most meet once or twice a month, not counting subcommittee meetings.

• Governance Concepts

School boards are creatures of the state Legislature. It is the General Assem-

bly's way of ensuring that a "thorough and efficient system of education" be provided for as dictated by the state constitution.

School directors have two roles. First, they are state officials, literally agents of the state Legislature, elected locally to administer the school system, consistent with the state School Code and other applicable state laws. Secondly, as locally elected officials, they also have the authority to create local laws, known as policies, just like a municipality creates ordinances.

Outside of the "sunshine meeting," a board member has no individual power except that delegated by the will of the majority at a sunshine meeting.

Generally speaking, the responsibilities of school boards can be summed up in three phrases. They 1) make plans, 2) enact policy and approve procedures, and 3) provide for a system to evaluate those policies and procedures.

• The Plan-Policy-Evaluate Cycle

Planning always starts with a perceived need to do or change something.

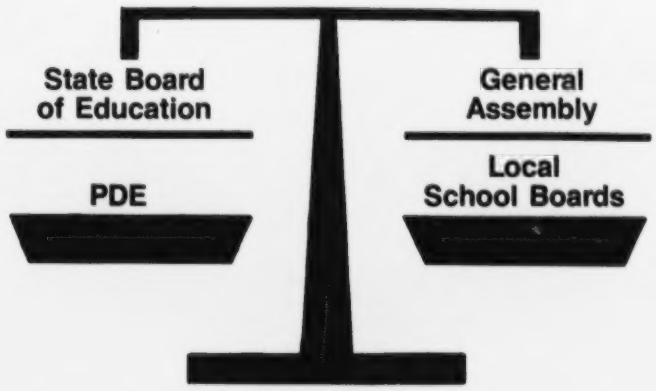
That initial perception can come to the board via a suggestion from a board member, the superintendent, a principal, a teacher, a parent, a student, or a taxpayer.

For example, suppose someone suggests the district offer a foreign language (such as Russian, Japanese or Chinese) not currently being taught in the school system. Initially a board member will make a motion that the district **consider** offering a new language. If that motion is seconded, discussion begins as to how that might be accomplished, whether it's a good idea, which of the three languages is most important, whether a qualified teacher is available etc. That discussion is likely to end with passage of a motion to have either a subcommittee of the board and/or one or more administrators in-

Basic Characteristics of an Effective School Director

The ability to function as one member of a nine-member governing board of school directors is not determined by sex, occupation, race, income or social standing. Effective school board members, however, are characterized by the following:

- A deep desire to serve children, and a strong belief in the values of public schools and local citizen control of public education by elected officials.
- The ability to work as part of a team, to engage in discussion and consensus building and to ultimately support the will of the majority.
- The willingness to spend the time required to do some homework, attend seminars, and otherwise acquire the knowledge base that will lead to well-informed, well-reasoned decision making.
- The recognition that the school district is often one of the largest employers in the community, and to accept the responsibility for seeing that the district is well-managed.
- The courage to make an occasional "tough" decision that may not be popular, but is necessary and in the best interests of the students.
- A commitment to develop and maintain high levels of trust and understanding with district staff.
- An ability to communicate to the community both the mission and vision of the school district, as well as the details and the rationale of the current budget proposal or the status of the teachers' contract negotiations.



Education is governed by the executive and legislative branches of government, at both the state and local levels. The State Board of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education comprise the executive branch; the General Assembly and local school boards represent the legislative functions.

Classes of school districts

First Class — those with 1.5 million or more residents (Philadelphia).

First Class A — those with between 350,000 and 1.5 million residents (Pittsburgh).

Second Class — those with between 30,000 and 350,000 residents (currently 80 Pennsylvania districts fall into this category).

Third Class — those with between 5,000 and 30,000 residents (currently 395 districts across the state).

Fourth Class — those with less than 5,000 residents (currently 24 across the state).

The 'big four' in public education

Governance of public education in Pennsylvania is divided among four entities: the **General Assembly, local school boards,** the **State Board of Education,** and the **Department of Education.**

The Department of Education has three main duties:

- To administer the laws of the commonwealth concerning public education.
- To receive mandated reports from local school districts.
- To provide technical assistance to individual districts.

The present State Board was created in 1963 and is made up of 21 members appointed by the governor. The board is organized into councils of basic and higher education. The State Board's main function is to develop rules and regulations that have the weight of law.

On balance, the four entities constitute a healthy system of checks and balances to help deliver the constitutional mandate of a thorough and efficient educational system.

vestigate the feasibility of proceeding, and to provide the full board with information and recommendations within two months.

Once that report is presented, the board might adopt a simple policy that would read something like this:

> Whereas, we live in a global community and, whereas we believe it is important that our students have the opportunity to learn to speak several languages, be it resolved we hereby adopt Russian I and II as official course offerings and authorize the creation of an additional teaching position in the foreign language department for someone who is certified to teach Russian and/or one or more other foreign languages and English.

The board also might approve administrative procedures that detail how the recruitment of that teacher is to be accomplished, the starting salary range to be offered, how to stimulate student interest in enrolling, etc.

Evaluation of that policy decision can occur at several times. Initial feed-

back on the availability of a teacher and student interest in selecting the course typically will be required by the board before the current school year is over. Assuming Russian I gets off the ground in September, the board generally will expect some report early in the fall about how well the course is being taught. Near the end of the school year the board will want administrative recommendations as to whether or not to continue with Russian II, how many sections of Russian I will be needed next year, etc.

Planning, enacting policy and approving procedures, and evaluating is a never-ending cycle. A successful Russian program might lead the board to consider Japanese, or to drop German.

• Constraints on Board Members

The power or authority of the board of education fits into three basic patterns, things it:

— Must do (mandatory).
— May do (permissive or discretionary).
— May not do (prohibitive).

The board **must:**

— Permanently retain the minutes, the auditor's annual reports, each annual financial report and other documents.
— Enter into collective bargaining agreements if the teachers or support staff unionize.
— Adopt the annual budget.
— Levy taxes. Appoint a tax collector under certain circumstances.
— Provide necessary school buildings.
— Provide special education for mentally or physically handicapped children.
— Provide for a school census of students.

The board **may:**

— Purchase or condemn land for school purposes.
— Sell unneeded land and buildings.
— Provide for food or milk for undernourished and poor children.

Local revenue sources for school districts

Taxes:

- Real estate
- Public Utility realty tax
- Payments in lieu of taxes
- Act 511 taxes (maximum amounts)
  - Per capita ($10)
  - Gross receipts tax on wholesalers (1 mill)
  - Gross receipts tax on retailers and restaurants (1 1/2 mills)
  - Wages, salaries or other earned income (1%)
  - Retail sales of tangible personal property (2%)
  - Real estate transfer (1%)
  - Amusement tax (10%)
  - Occupation tax (using millage — $10)
  - Occupation tax (not using millage — unlimited)
  - Occupational privilege tax ($10)
- Delinquent taxes

Other:

- Interest on investments
- Revenue from student activities
- Revenue from local governmental units
- Rentals
- Contributions and donations from private sources
- Tuition
- Transportation fees

10 trends for the 1990s

1. English will emerge as the first truly universal language.
2. Pacific Rim cities — Los Angeles, Sydney and Tokyo — will replace the Atlantic Rim cities of New York, Paris and London as cultural and economic powers.
3. A renaissance will take place in the arts, literature and spirituality. High-tech will not be the big story in the '90s.
4. The middle class in America will become larger and more affluent.
5. Suburbs and rural communities will grow in population.
6. We will see the end of the welfare state and the death of socialism.
7. Information technology is driving change — there will be a single worldwide information grid upon which the global economy rests.
8. We are moving to an era of the individual as entrepreneur.
9. We're slowly moving toward worldwide free trade. There will no longer be a United States economy.
10. A worldwide economy will dictate new economic theories, with the traditional "boom and bust" business cycle continuing to be challenged.

— Futurist John Naisbitt

— Authorize attendance of board members or of the superintendent or other employees at educational meetings, and pay necessary expenses.
— Suspend or expel pupils from school under certain conditions, or cause them to be brought before the juvenile court.

Nearly 64 million children lived in the United States as of July 1988, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, with 18.5 million people under the age of 5 and 45.4 million ages 5-17. Nationally, children account for 26% of the total U.S. population, far below the 36% they represented in 1960. Demographers project that children's share of the population will continue to fall, to perhaps 21% by 2020. Pennsylvania has a total of 2.8 million children — 791,000 under age 5 and 2 million ages 5-17.

— Provide free transportation of public and nonpublic pupils.
— Require students to pay to participate in extracurricular activities.

The board may **not:**
— Authorize construction of schools without prior approval of plans and specifications by the departments of Education and Labor and Industry.
— Hire relatives of board members as teachers except by a majority vote of the board, excluding the member who is related to the applicant.
— Demand, request or accept in any way a gift from a teacher or supervisor.
— Permit a child to attend school without proper immunizations.
— Refuse accommodation or make any distinction to any pupil because of race, creed or color, sex, national origin or ancestry, or any handicap.

• The "Sunshine Law"

Pennsylvania's Sunshine Law requires that most items that a board votes on be discussed in meetings open to the public.

A few topics such as personnel issues, labor negotiations, purchasing land, and meeting with the district's solicitor can be conducted privately in what is called an "executive session."

All votes, even on topics discussed privately in executive session, must be cast in public.

The public has the right to attend and witness the board meetings, but the Sunshine Law does not grant citizens the right to speak. However, virtually all boards, by written policy or custom, provide for a "public comment" part in the agenda.

Subcommittee meetings of the board also are subject to the Sunshine Law. All meetings must be advertised in the newspaper at least 24 hours before they occur.

• Public Documents Law

Pennsylvania citizens also are entitled to examine and obtain copies of public documents such as minutes, bills, vouchers and contracts. However, information in personnel files and other confidential records and correspondence are **not** included in this law.

Schools and Community

Typically, the local school board is one of the largest employers in the community it serves. As a provider of public services, the board has an obligation, perhaps a mandate, to communicate to all its constituents the successes, the problems and the issues relating to its educational program.

That is no small order, especially in today's hi-tech, information-packed environment that also is influenced by sweeping demographic and social changes.

At one time schools were asked only to teach the three Rs — reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. Today our schools are asked to do much, much more. For example:

- Convince students not to use drugs.
- Teach good nutrition.
- Feed some students breakfast.
- Provide lunch.
- Check vision, hearing and teeth.
- Teach how to ride bikes safely.
- Provide driver training.
- And even explain how to make babies.

Because of the complex demands placed on society and the public schools, the challenge before school boards and administrators is to ensure a process

Teaching gaining favor as career among college students

The number of college students planning to pursue teaching careers has climbed by two-thirds since 1982, while interest in engineering and computer technology careers has dropped dramatically. The increase in students planning to go into teaching rose from a low of 4.7% in 1982 to 8.1% in 1987.

SOURCE: American Council on Education and UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute.

U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos challenged the nation to educate every student to his or her full potential. During American Education week in November 1989, he called on:

- **Parents to be involved**
- **States to define expectations of graduates and to measure their success**
- **Schools to provide a complete, rigorous, well-rounded curriculum**
- **Teachers to teach and encourage character development as well as principles of democracy**
- **The public to help meet the challenge of ensuring our nation's future**

Educating a child, he said, "is not a task that schools can do alone."

whereby all members of the community are informed about the schools and their mission.

Involving the school family and the public in this process is very important for several reasons. Major changes in our society and demographic shifts in population require that school officials pay close attention to their communities as well as to state and national concerns. Several statistics support such claims:

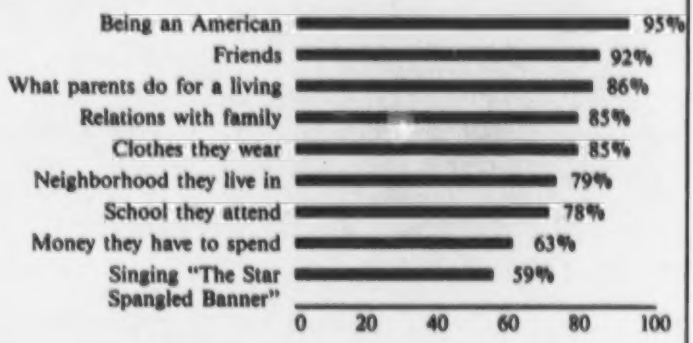
- First and foremost, people are having fewer children. Because of this school enrollments have declined. Today, most school districts are half the size they were a decade ago.
- Because of shifting enrollments, officials have been faced with closing buildings, laying off employees and, in some cases, renovating facilities.
- At the other end, schools have been facing teacher shortages, especially in such areas as math and science.
- For better or for worse, collective bargaining has had a tremendous impact on schools, at least from a public perception.
- In addition, there has been a tremendous turnover in school board service, demanding more time and energy by school directors.
- Today, more than 75% of the average American community is comprised of taxpayers without children. This means that three out of every four taxpayers in a community might not have a direct interest in the schools.
- There also are claims by some critics that school enrollments are going down while costs are rising; but test scores and other indicators would suggest that schools are not doing an effective job of educating young people.

Such statistics and criticism (whether true or not) suggest that the school board must develop effective ways of communicating with the public and with students, teachers and other school employees.

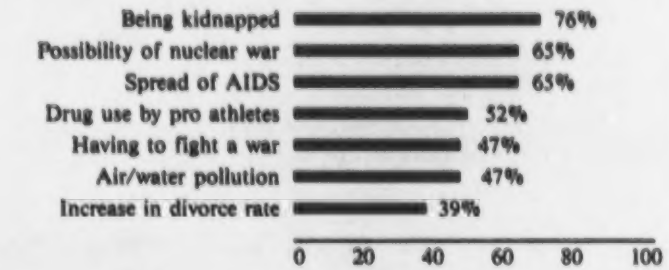
Building and maintaining public confidence in the schools requires support from each member of the school family.

Attitudes of today's youth

Things that make them feel good . . .


Being an American 95%
Friends 92%
What parents do for a living 86%
Relations with family 85%
Clothes they wear 85%
Neighborhood they live in 79%
School they attend 78%
Money they have to spend 63%
Singing "The Star Spangled Banner" 59%
0 20 40 60 80 100

Things that concern them . . .


Being kidnapped 76%
Possibility of nuclear war 65%
Spread of AIDS 65%
Drug use by pro athletes 52%
Having to fight a war 47%
Air/water pollution 47%
Increase in divorce rate 39%
0 20 40 60 80 100

A nationwide poll of children aged 8-17 revealed they have overwhelmingly positive views of their families, schools and country. About 95% said they "feel good" about being American, while 78% "feel good" about their schools. Among all children, 59% said they prefer having their mothers work outside the home, compared with 34% who said they prefer a mother who stays at home to take care of the family. Some 73% of the children of mothers with full-time jobs favor being raised that way.

SOURCE: The Roper Organization, Inc., 1987.

The public's perception of what goes on in the schools is just as important as what actually happens in the schools. Often the public's perceptions differ from reality.

In order to address and develop two-way communication to the different "publics" that make up a school district, school officials need to find out where their publics are. Research about effective communication suggests that identification of audiences (or groups of people), then tailoring your message to that audience, will improve the chances of reaching that particular group. (Communication, to be complete, requires the originator of the message to send it to the receiver and the receiver must understand the message before communication is complete.)

Analyzing the various audiences in a school system can be done effectively by looking at "internal" and "external" publics. **Internal** groups are people within the education family or those people directly associated with the school system or a school building. **External** groups are people who have an indirect relationship with the school system or a school building. Both groups are important and both need information about the schools.

As an example, here is a partial list of internal groups that comprise any given school district:

- Teachers
- Students
- Principals
- School directors
- Secretaries
- Bus drivers
- Custodians
- Teacher aides
- Volunteers
- Nurses
- Social workers
- Guidance counselors

While each school community is unique, external groups might be divided as these examples:

- Parents
- Real estate agencies
- Churches
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- City council
- Civic organizations
- Social groups
- PTA/PTO groups
- Senior citizen agencies
- Barbers and beauticians
- Booster clubs

(Add or subdivide the list to reflect the community and school district you live in.)

Once a school system is analyzed according to audiences, various communication tools can be researched to involve, invite or initiate what will go into the "school message" to inform the public.

For example, different groups may need different information. A parent may need to know about bus schedules. A student may need to know about course credits. Teachers may need to know about inservice training programs. Senior citizens may need to know what community events will be held in the schools.

The point here is that once a group is identified, school officials can determine what kind of information each group needs and then proceed in providing that information to selected audiences. Such a process ensures to some degree that information gets to the right group at the right time.

Most people think of communication as printed pieces such as newsletters, news releases, memos and correspondence.

Education partnerships between schools and business, industry and community groups more than tripled between 1983-84 and 1987-88. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, the number of partnerships rose from 42,200 to 140,800. Most often, public school principals initiated partnerships. Business were the most frequent sponsors, providing guest speakers, demonstrations or access to facilities and equipment, or student incentives such as awards or scholarships.

While important and useful, they are only part of the process. Research also proves that the best communication is one-to-one. In a school system this is not always possible, therefore many districts look for ways to involve students, parents and the general public in events within the schools.

Let's look at a few examples. First identify the internal and external groups, then the event, and then the expected result:

Group	Activity	Purpose
• Parents	Parent-teacher conference	Improved communication on student progress
• Nonparents	Brochure on kindergarten	Preparation for starting school
• Senior citizens	Brochure about plays, concerts, adult education	Encourage participation in school activities
• Senior high students	Information about volunteer programs	Encourage school-community partnerships and involvement
• Service Clubs	Special invitations during American Education Week	Offer opportunities for these groups to have their meetings in the schools
• Doctors/dentists	School district newsletter	Use in waiting rooms for general information about the schools
• High school drama club	Special programs to community groups	Foster goodwill to the general public

School boards set the tone of openness and understanding to all the "publics" within a school system. Once a board has determined its many audiences (as in the previous paragraphs), it can turn its attention to how it will:

- Explain its decision.
- Organize for effective communication.
- Evaluate its programs and activities.

As noted earlier, school boards set a course of action for the district through the policy process. School-community relations activities should start with the district's communication policy. There are four steps to be considered.

1. **Policy review is a continuous process.** If the district does not have a stated communication policy, one should be developed.
2. **The policy should be approved through formal board action.** It should be reviewed periodically and communicated to all the staff.
3. **It should express the purpose of school community relations,** dele-

gating to the staff the necessary authority to achieve stated goals.

4. **And the board should allocate sufficient resources** to carry out stated objectives.

Perhaps it also is important to remember that the board's role in effective communication extends well beyond the limits of its policy book. The board's role as a communicator should include:

- Outreach and publicity, including volunteerism, school organizations and special advisory committees.
- Public participation, including use of the media, board notices and minutes, action summaries and other board publications.
- Public activities involving board members with staff, students and community organizations.
- Relationships with governmental, educational and other agencies, other school districts, state and national associations, civic groups and the business community.

The size and educational priorities of any school district will affect the extent to which each of these elements is emphasized in the board's policy and the district's community relations program. The district's total communication effort will be only as good as the school board and staff insist that it be. Effective community relations become a reality only when communication becomes a matter of policy.

Of all the groups that contribute to the community's perception of the schools, perhaps none is as important as the students themselves. After all that's who the system is intended to serve.

In many districts student leadership, especially at the junior and senior high levels, has various opportunities to address the administration and school board. Some boards have arranged for student advisers or student representatives to the board. Almost one-third of the state's school boards provide some structure that allows student input to the board. These opportunities range from very sophisticated arrangements, such as an official student school director, to rather informal processes such as student council leadership periodically appearing on the board agenda.

One school district has two student representatives on its board who attend all meetings of the board (except executive sessions). The students receive all materials of the board, participate in all discussions and vote on action items of the board even though their votes cannot be counted officially. These students serve under a formalized position description outlining their duties and attend inservice

Youth voting

- Since 1972, when 18-year-olds were first allowed to vote, a disproportionate share of the overall voting decline has occurred among 18 to 24-year-olds.
- In 1984, less than 40% of these young citizens voted, and only about half were even registered to vote.
- In the 1986 mid-term elections, only 16.7% went to the polls.
- Little more than one-third of eligible 18 to 24-year-olds voted in the November 1988 presidential election.

Our schools are producing a nation of economic illiterates, according to a 1989 survey of 8,205 high school seniors. The survey found students could answer only 35% of the questions asked about the national economy, only 25% could define the terms "profit" and "inflation," only 39% knew what the "gross national product" was, and only 45% knew what a "government budget deficit" was.

American high school and college students are using less illicit drugs because of changing attitudes and increased knowledge about drugs' harmful effects, states a survey conducted in 1988 by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Overall, the survey shows the proportion of high school seniors using any illicit drug during the prior year fell from 42% in 1987 to 39% in 1988. This compares with 54% in 1979, the peak year.

training programs such as those sponsored by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

Another avenue for student interaction is through student advisory councils. Some principals and superintendents establish these groups, comprised of officers of student councils and other extracurricular clubs, to provide two-way communication between the student body and school officials. In some cases the council publishes a newsletter for the student body and copies are distributed to members of the board.

Many school boards in the state provide time on each monthly agenda for student recognition and reports. This encourages two-way communication between the student body and the local board and also promotes public awareness of student progress.

Student publications also provide another vehicle for communications to the general public, the school board and others on the school staff. Student newspapers provide an opportunity to highlight and feature student activities and achievement. Handled responsibly, student publications also can reflect opinion about social and school issues.

Student volunteer programs, which are growing in numbers throughout the state and nation, are another avenue for student learning and community involvement. These activities, many of which are for credit toward graduation, help extend

5
major values of high school students lives

Having a successful career 27%
Good first marriage 20%
Being better parents than their own are 20%
Contributing to society 20%
Making more money 11%

High school leaders seem far more concerned with social issues than in the past, according to a recent survey by the National Association of Student Councils. "Making more money" ranks a distant fifth in the top five values of high school students; previously it had ranked first.

A 1989 poll commissioned by the Family Resource Coalition and conducted by the Gallup organization found that 84% of American parents would pay higher taxes to improve the nation's public schools. Of the 500 parents surveyed, 56% said they would pay higher taxes to help parents afford child care, and also would support with more tax dollars drug abuse prevention, affordable housing and health care.

the school's partnership with taxpayers who may no longer have direct involvement in the public schools, especially senior citizens and the business community.

Needless-to-say, students and school staff have an important role in building public confidence in their schools. With the encouragement of school boards, teachers and students can contribute to fostering enhanced understanding about the successes and achievements in their schools. Said another way, communication to the public should be as high a priority as teaching and learning.

Such a philosophy among the board, students and staff will lay a solid foundation to make schools what they should be: Warm, friendly and creative places for students to learn.

Why kids go to school

Are you ready for this? The main reason kids go to school is to LEARN, according to The American Chicle Youth Poll. And, when asked to grade their schools, only 22% gave them less than a B.

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